

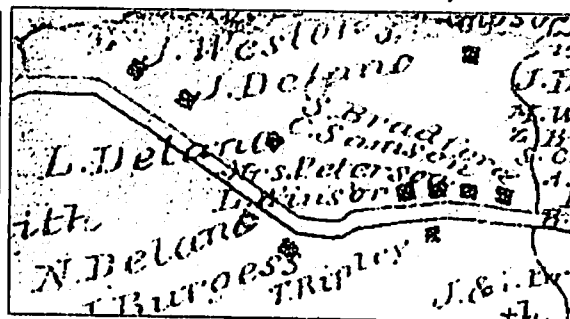
## Journey Down Surplus Street

PAR T VIII

# The Delano Farm

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

Last week in this series, we visited one of Duxbury's few remaining half houses built on improved land which was once part of a much larger farm owned by John Delano. He was a direct descendant of Jonathan Delano who came to the Surplus Street area around 1701 and established the Delano farm. Over the next two and half centuries, his large tract of land on both the north and south sides of Surplus Street would pass through many Delano family members, and numerous divisions of land and exchanges of house lots would occur. A pathway can border



**1833 map showing Delano Farms**

*Courtesy of David Corey*

on more than just cow pastures and orchards. It can touch the lives of those that tilled its surrounding soil, and meet the needs of many while shaping the history of both the town and country.

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## Journey Down Surplus Street: Part VIII

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### The Delano Farm 135, 153, 184 Surplus Street

When Eleanor Prince was a teenager her grandparents, Harvey Reynolds and Cora Delano Reynolds, celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at the family's homestead at 184 Surplus Street. It was the year 1940, and their eleven surviving children were present to honor their parents.

Cora Delano Reynolds was born and raised on Surplus Street. This was her farm, her homeland, where she had given birth to twelve of her thirteen children in the small birthing room off the kitchen. Cora, herself, was born on the farm back in 1867. Her father, John Delano Jr., a fisherman and farmer, was also born here, as was her grandfather and other Delano relatives.

Cora met her future husband on the train, which passed through the area more than twelve times a day. She, like most young women of Duxbury, enjoyed shopping in down town Plymouth and would take the train there regularly. Harvey Reynolds was the conductor who fell in love with the young and beautiful Cora Delano from Surplus Street. For Cora, the feeling was mutual. Her parents, John Delano and Mary Swift Delano, were not as pleased with her choice of a train conductor for a husband, but Harvey Reynolds proved to be a devoted husband, loving father and industrious man.

Harvey and Cora settled on the Delano farm where they would raise a very large family. Their son, Harvey J. Reynolds, Jr., was born in 1900 followed by Mary, Gladys, Darius, Austin, Ella, Leslie, Francis, Cora, Lila, and Robert who was the only child not born at the farm but at Jordan Hospital. Cora and Harvey Reynolds had two other children who did not survive—John B. who was three years old when he died of shock following scalds, and Beatrice M. who passed away in August of 1908 at the age of three months. "They couldn't get her formula right," noted Prince.



Gladys Reynolds Dwyer grew up on the Delano/Reynolds farm and served as an Army nurse during World War I.

Photo courtesy of Eleanor Prince

Life on the farm was very busy for the family, including the children. Gladys Reynolds Dwyer described her childhood routine as going to school and returning home to do the chores



(From left to right, at top row): Harvey, Ella, Gladys, Mary, Lila, Cora and Austin. (next row) Francis, Darius, Harvey Reynolds, Cora Delano Reynolds, Leslie and Robert seated in front. Photo taken on Harvey and Cora's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 1940.

Photo courtesy of Eleanor Prince

on the farm. Household duties and farm work was usually divided up among the children based on their age and ability. The girls would often have the house chores such as making beds, mending clothes and cooking. On the Delano farm, Mary Reynolds made all the family's clothing, no small task for a family of thirteen. The boys would be in charge of gathering wood for the hearths, and taking care of the farm animals such as horses, cows and pigs.

"Horses were a heavy chore, with weekly grooming and stall cleaning, and wagons and harnesses to be kept in condition," noted the Reverend Robert E.

Merry in the *Duxbury Book*. As a teenager, Merry recalled his chore of chopping kindling for the kitchen stove as the 5:30 commuter train from Boston rolled through town. "A cloud of steam would hang above it as it passed the John Alden House and crossed the meadow and the Bluefish River marsh" headed for Duxbury Station.

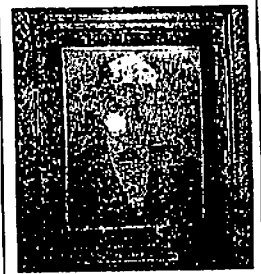
Although Reynolds worked as the train conductor, he supplemented his income by growing vegetables and selling them to Duxbury's summer residents. His daughter Gladys, who became an army nurse in World War I, recalled helping her father deliver his vegetables when she was a young girl. His vegetable business was a reflection of the general economy and times. As the population in America continued to rise, so too did the number of vegetable growers.

In addition, small fruit was sold along side the fresh vegetables. "Immense quantities of apples, especially those from minor orchards on general farms, went into cider and vinegar, or to canneries and evaporators who prepared dried apples for the hotel and grocery trade," said author Howard S. Russell in his book "A Long, Deep Furrow: Three centuries of Farming in New England." The older children and women of the farm still sliced and dried apples in the kitchen on hanging strings around the fire. "A tedious job," noted Russell.

The Delano/Reynolds farm also included a large orchard. A photo taken in the early years of Cora and Harvey's marriage shows the couple sitting with several of their young children, a baby on Cora's lap, in the family orchard. "This picture

was the second one taken...a cow had wandered into the orchard behind the family...and so Cora demanded the family get back into their Sunday clothes and retake the photo minus the cow," laughed Prince.

In the early decades of the

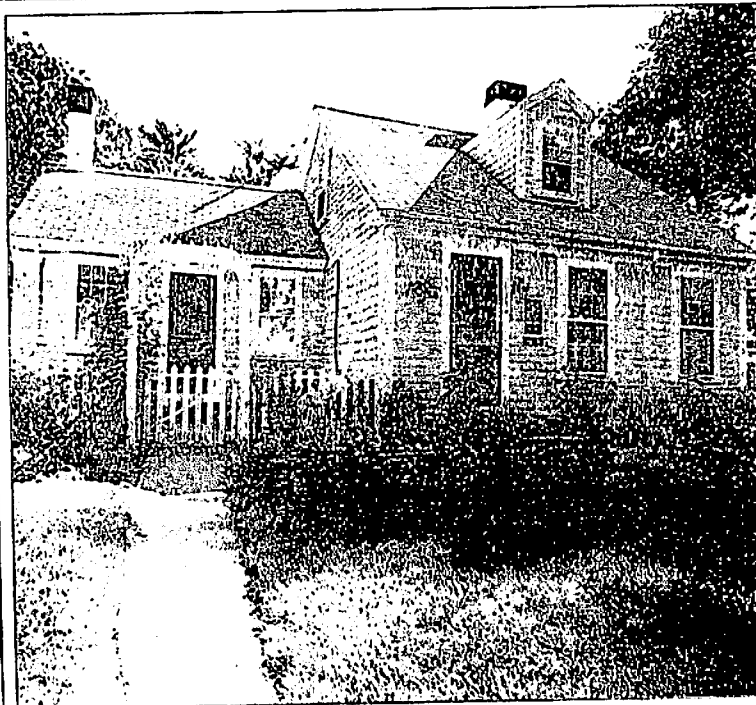


John Delano inherited his family's farm on Surplus Street

Photo by Deborah Katz

1900s, a disproportionate amount of farm work fell to the women of the homesteads. Often the farm wife added additional work to her already heavy responsibilities in an effort to raise needed income during tough times. She might increase the farm poultry raising or butter making efforts, or do additional canning in glass jars to sell to winter markets. "If, in the effort to find a livelihood, the farm advertised for summer visitors, as many did, she toiled through the hot months to serve them fresh biscuits and strawberry shortcake, while she coped with the mountains of washing," said Russell.

Cora Delano must have kept very busy with the house and farm tasks along with raising eleven children. She, like so many women of her time, was greatly helped by a few "modern" conveniences. The iron



135 Surplus Street was once the homestead of Luther Delano in 1795.

Photo by Shelly Babin

## The Delano Farm

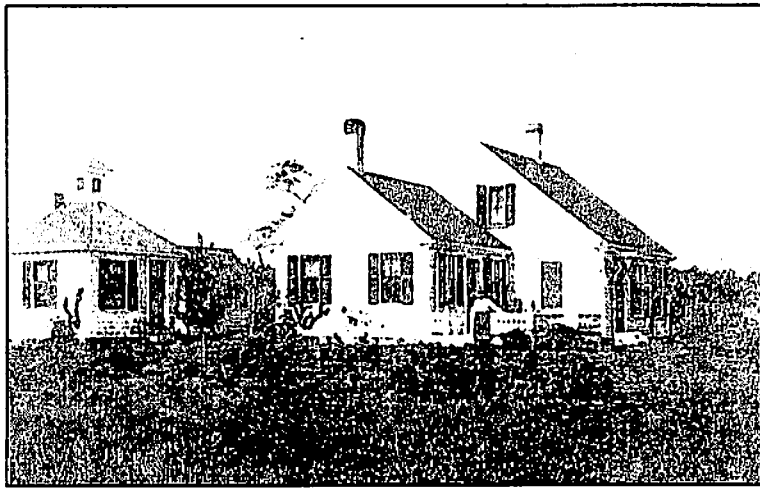
cook stove replaced the fireplace and brick oven, and proved to be a far better way to prepare the family's meals and heat the kitchen during the cold winter months. The ice chest was also introduced at this time, "often kept cold by ice from a pond on the farm," said Russell. In addition, the invention of machinery for haying and harvesting considerably reduced the number of needed laborers, which the farm wife often had to feed.

For all these modern inventions, however, one factor in the first three decades of the 1900s offset the farm wife's lighter load. A new trend was seen in which farmers' daughters began to leave the homestead. The daughters often sought independence from their families. As one woman noted to the Vermont Board of Agriculture in 1896, to explain this new phenomenon: "if she has a letter to mail she doesn't have to

Wellesley. Eleanor Prince's mother, Ella, went to N.Y. where she became a baby nurse, returning later to Plymouth with the Stern family to care for their baby.

Gladys also sought independence but in a different way than her sisters. She went to stay with her sister Cora and attend nursing school at the St. Vincent School of Nursing, later joining the army and requesting overseas duty in World War I.

There were other Delano family members living on the land that was originally part of Jonathan Delano's extensive farm along Surplus Street. In 1795, Ebenezer Delano, the son of Jonathan, gave his son Luther one acre and a house now 135 Surplus Street (see photo). Luther was married to Irene Sampson, the daughter of Amos Sampson. Unfortunately, Irene gave birth to only one son who was a stillborn. They lived in this half cape un-



135 Surplus Street where Luther and Irene Sampson Delano resided from 1795-1811.

Photo circa 1900. Courtesy of David and Kathy Pyle

the United States, down from the 69 percent of farm labor in 1840 when John Delano Jr., Gladys's grandfather, tilled this soil. That same year he purchased from his father for \$500, the homestead farm, outbuildings, two wood lots, and a parcel of English meadow.

He was the son of John Delano and Sally Sampson Delano, and was already married to Mary Swift and raising his own family here on Surplus Street when he took over the farm.

Historically, the period between 1825 and 1860, when John Delano, Jr. worked the farm, was a healthy, if not prosperous period for New England farmers. The four ingredients responsible for this farming success story were a surge in transportation expansion; considerable advances in education; the use of improved equipment, and the amazing growth of both industry and population.

In 1840, the country's population was over 17 million compared to 5 million in 1800 when John Delano Jr.'s father worked the family farm. The railroad systems provided a new means for transporting goods, and along with the rapid increase in industry, greatly impacted the farming business. One Massachusetts gazette writer in 1846 noted how hard the farmers were working to meet the demands in factory villages for their produce.

It is important to note the two wood lots John Jr. received from his father. As with vegetables, poultry, eggs and beef, wood was another sought after commodity. By 1848, thousands upon thousands of cords of wood were used to power the locomotives, and many more millions of cords were depleted for domestic purposes. "Boston alone bought 120,000 cords in 1825, one sixth from nearby farms, the rest by sea from Maine," noted Russell. Ship-

builders up and down the coast of New England paid cash for oak and hard pine knees. A farmer could expect to receive a hefty 50 dollars for a fine pasture of oak, and still be left with all the branches for his own needs. However, as Henry David Thoreau once commented, "some farmers were not to be persuaded to part with

Point areas. "Neighbors and friends would go into his barn and help themselves to the eggs; there was a box to drop the money into and it was all done on the honor system. It cost 25 cents for a dozen of eggs, and you were expected to bring back the empty box," recalled Jeanne Clark, a long-time Surplus Street resident.



184 Surplus Street was once the homestead farm of the Delano/Reynolds family.

Photo by Shelly Bablin

ask Pa for two cents, and she doesn't want to be obliged to tease for a new dress, hat, or shoes."

The Reynolds' daughters also sought their independence at a young age. By the time they were about 14 years old, they left the farmhouse to work for several Duxbury summer residents. An arrangement was made between the employing family and Cora and Harvey Reynolds in which their daughter would leave with the family in the fall to care for the children in exchange for room and board, and most importantly, graduation from a local high school, noted Prince. One daughter, Cora Reynolds worked for a summer resident from Worcester and went to live there, eventually meeting her future husband and settling in the area. Her sister Lila went to work for a family from

til Luther died in 1811, and the house along with a 1/4 acre went to the town which Luther had decided to in 1809, presumably for back taxes owed. According to the Town Meeting Warrant, the town voted to have the selectmen sell the property by public sale. Irene went to live in the Almshouse, located on Depot Street, just down the road from her former homestead.

Nathaniel Delano Jr. resided in the house that is currently the Cape Cod dwelling at 153 Surplus Street. (See photo) From map research, we know his son Hiram, a blacksmith, later lived in the house with his wife Betsey Holmes Delano and their five children. Eventually the property passed on to their son, Hiram Thomas, and remained in the Delano family until almost 1920.

By 1900, farmers made up 38 percent of the work force in



153 Surplus Street was once part of the Delano farm where Nathaniel Delano resided in the early 1800s.

Photo courtesy of Don Foster

a fine pasture of oak for mere money."

In 1950, after Cora and Harvey Reynolds passed away, their son Harvey Jr. became the owner of the homestead and farm, at 184 Surplus Street, after he bought out his siblings' shares in the property. He decided to change the farm over into a poultry farm noted Prince. He brought his eggs to Brockton, and also sold them in the Standish Shore and Powder

Today, the Delano/Reynolds farm is remembered through the historical buildings left behind, the few surviving trees that were once part of a large orchard, and two newer paths called Reynolds Way and Christmas Tree Way.

Next in our series, we will visit two historical houses and learn about the Westons whose livelihood depended on the sea as we journey down Surplus Street.

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